

Rockaway Beach, Oregon

People and Place

Location

Rockaway Beach lies in Tillamook County, on Oregon's Northern Coast. This coastal community lies 14 miles north of the City of Tillamook on Highway 101, between Nehalem Bay to the north and Tillamook Bay to the south. Located 87 miles west of Portland, the community lies at 123° 56'30" W and 45° 36' 49" N. Rockaway Beach occupies a total land area of 1.6 square miles, including 1.5 square miles of land and 0.08 square miles of water. The community is known for the 7-mile strip of beach it abuts.

Demographic Profile

According to the 2000 U.S. Census the total population of Rockaway Beach was 1267, an increase from 906 persons in 1980. The 2000 U.S. Census shows a relatively even gender distribution with slightly more females (50.8%) than males (49.2%). The median age of the Rockaway Beach population in 2000 was 52.2 years, notably higher than the national median age of 35.3. Of the population 18 and over surveyed by the 2000 U.S. Census about 82.6% earned the equivalent of a high school diploma or higher, 15.7% earned a bachelor's degree or higher, and 4.3% earned a graduate or professional degree. Approximately 75% of the Rockaway Beach population lived in family households in 2000.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the Rockaway Beach population was 95.8% White, 0.08% Black or African American, 1.1% American Indian and Alaska Native, and 0.6% Asian. Approximately 0.7% identified with some other race and 1.7% of the population was of two or more races. Two percent of the population identified themselves as Hispanic or Latino. Slightly less than two percent (1.7%) of the population was foreign-born.

History

Long before Euro-Americans came to the Pacific Northwest Native Americans inhabited Tillamook County. Groups such as the Tillamooks, Nehalems, and Nestuccas fished and hunted throughout Tillamook County. These peoples had a close relationship with the sea and the area's waterways. This was perhaps most evident by the boats they built. Their dugout canoes ranged from tiny vessels used for duck hunting to large canoes used for long distance travel to California. The Indians of Tillamook Bay died in large numbers due to the onset of European diseases. Their population was estimated to be around 2200 at the turn of the 19th century and declined to one tenth of that size by the middle of the 1800s.

Although Captain Robert Gray was credited with being the first Euro-American to land in Tillamook Bay in 1788, it was not until the middle of the next century that White settlers came to the area. Unfortunately, Gray's stay in the area did not go off without a hitch as one of his crewmen was killed by Native Americans after a quarrel. The entrance to the bay is recognized as challenging today and was identified as perilous in Gray's time, as an account by a member of Gray's crew tells of an awkwardly situated shoal, narrow entrance, and strong tide.

In 1853 Tillamook County was created by the territorial government. The County's earliest industries were shipping, logging, fishing, farming, and dairy. Fishing played a key role as it was the major avenue for bringing cash into the area. Fish were caught in the region's coastal waters, bays, and rivers, and canned in numerous canneries throughout the area. Middlemen bought the packaged fish and sold them in Willamette Valley, south of Rockaway Beach. The funds brought into the area from the sale of fish enabled the development of other enterprises and aided the growth of Tillamook Bay's communities.

Two sectors that developed alongside fishing in Tillamook County were the dairy and lumber industries. The dairy industry thrived on the production of cheese which could withstand long storage periods for distribution. The lumber industry started to take off in the 1890s as containers for dairy, fish, and other products became necessary. In 1911 the Pacific Railway and Navigation Company constructed a railway from Portland to Tillamook. This reliable source of transportation facilitated the growth of the timber, dairy, and fishing industries.

Rockaway Beach was a sparsely populated area up until the early 1900s. The Pacific Railway and Navigation Company's rail line made the coastal communities of Northern Oregon more accessible to settlers as well. Rockaway Beach was connected by rail to Portland in 1912. The Ocean Crest apartments were built in Rockaway that year to house railway workers. The area became a summer tourist destination during this time as well. As city folk from Portland began to spend summers in the area. Men who worked in Portland during the week would take the Friday train ("the daddy train") to Rockaway to meet their families for the weekend.

Residents have most likely participated in the commercial fishing industry at the nearby ports of Garibaldi and Nehalem for some time (see the Garibaldi Community Profile for more historical information on fishing in the area). Unfortunately, little information could be found on the community's history. The community's tourist industry relies on the area's sportfishing as an attraction. The significance of sportfishing to the Rockaway Beach's tourist industry is perhaps most evident by the large volume of sportfishing licenses (1027) sold by local vendors in 2000. Rockaway Beach is becoming increasingly known as a retirement community, as 50% of its households were used seasonally and the population's median age was 52 years in 2000. The community of Rockaway Beach holds several annual festivals and celebrations, a kite festival, an arts and crafts festival, a 4th of July fireworks show, and an Oktoberfest celebration. These festivals highlight the importance of tourism to the area's economy.^{1, 2, 3, 4, 5}

Infrastructure

Current Economy

Lincoln County's principal industries in 1998 were agriculture, lumber, recreation and tourism, and food processing. The five largest employers in Rockaway Beach in 2003 include (product/number of employees): Tillamook Country Smoker (snack products/160); McRae & Sons, Inc. (specialty hardwood products/90); Garibaldi Dry Dock, Inc. (boat building and repair/65); the Nehalem Telephone and Telegraph Co. (telephone communications/15); and Nehalem Bay Ready Mix (concrete producer/6). In 2000 the arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services industries employed 17.7% of Rockaway Beach's employed civilian population 16 years and over,

while retail trade employed 15.2% of the population, and the educational, health and social services industries employed 14.7% of the population.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census the unemployment rate for the community of Rockaway Beach was 5.8% (calculated by dividing the unemployed population by the labor force), while 49.4% of those 16 years of age and older were employed, and 47.5% of those 16 years of age and over were not in the labor force. In 2000 approximately 15.2% of the employed civilian population 16 years of age and over was employed by the government and 0.5% by the armed forces. In the same year agriculture, fishing, forestry or hunting employed 3.6% of the employed civilian population 16 years of age and over. This statistic may not be accurate as those who work in the natural resource industries are often self employed and as a result are often underrepresented by the U.S. Census.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census the per capita income in Rockaway Beach was \$17,766 in 1999, while the median household income was \$29,798. In comparison, the national per capita income for 1999 was \$21,587, while the national median household income was considerably higher at \$41,994. There were 1573 housing units in Rockaway Beach in 2000. Approximately 40.4% of the housing units were occupied, while 59.6% were vacant. The percentage of housing units that were owner and renter occupied was 67.2% and 32.8% respectively. It is noteworthy that 85.5% of the vacancies were due to seasonal, recreational, or occasional use, while the national average (percentage of vacancies due to seasonal, recreational or occasional use) for the same year was 34.3%. Approximately 10.8% of the Rockaway Beach population lived below the poverty level in 1999.

Governance

The community of Rockaway Beach was founded in 1909 and the City was incorporated in 1942. The City operates under a mayoral form of government. The State of Oregon has no general sales tax but levies a 1% tax on overnight lodging.

Fishing businesses located in Oregon or deriving income from Oregon resources must pay a corporate excise or income tax totaling 6% of their net Oregon income. Wholesale fish dealers, canners, and bait dealers pay a landing fee that is determined from a percentage of the value of the food fish purchased from commercial harvesters. Salmon and Steelhead Restoration and Enhancement (R&E) landing fees are \$0.05 per pound for round, \$.0575 per pound for dressed, and \$.0605 per pound for dressed with heads off. Other regular landing fees are based on value; salmon and steelhead are 3.15% of value (including eggs and parts); all other fish and shellfish are 1.09% of value, and near-shore species are 5% of value.

Vessel owners must pay registration and title fees, and marine fuel taxes that support boating facilities, marine law enforcement, and boating safety education. Fishing boats and equipment may be taxed as personal property if they are valued at less than \$1 million. If their value exceeds this amount, they are taxed as industrial property. In 2004, title transfer fees are \$30 and registration fees are \$3 per foot based on center length of vessel. Oregon levies a fuel tax of \$0.24 per gallon of gasoline and use fuel. The Oregon Department of Agriculture administers four commodity commissions, Oregon Albacore Commission, Oregon Dungeness Crab Commission, Oregon Salmon Commission, and Oregon Trawl Commission. Fishermen pay fees to these commissions for marketing and lobbying on behalf of fishermen involved in these specific fisheries.

The nearest enforcement office for the National Marine Fisheries Service is located 50 miles away in Astoria. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife is headquartered in Salem, Oregon, however the North Coast Watershed District Office is located 14 miles away in Tillamook. The closest U.S. Coast Guard Station is located five miles away in Garibaldi. Portland is home to the district office for the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services and Pacific Fisheries Management Council meetings.

Facilities

The closest airport certified for carrier operations lies 38 miles away in Astoria and the nearest airport offering international service is the Portland International Airport, 87 miles to the north. Three smaller public-use airports lie within a 30 minute drive from Rockaway Beach in the communities of Manzanita, Tillamook, and Seaside.

Rockaway Beach lies in the Neah-Kah-Nie School District. The community houses the District's junior and senior high school (7-12 grades) but the District's two elementary schools lie in the nearby communities of Garibaldi and Nehalem. Electrical service is provided to Rockaway Beach residents by the Tillamook PUD. The City of Rockaway Beach provides the community's water supply and wastewater services. Public safety in the area is administered by the Rockaway Police Department. The closest hospital, Tillamook County General Hospital, is located in nearby Tillamook, 15 miles to the south. Additional hospitals are found in Seaside and Astoria, some 24 and 40 miles away respectively. Overnight accommodations in the Rockaway Beach area include at least a dozen hotels, numerous rental homes, and three parks that are suitable for recreational vehicle (RV) use and camping.

Involvement in West Coast Fisheries

Commercial Fishing

Recorded data indicates that no commercial landings were made in Rockaway Beach in 2000 however community members did participate in West Coast commercial fisheries that year as vessel owners and permit holders.

Rockaway Beach residents owned 20 vessels in 2000 that participated in the region's fisheries, and nine of the 20 vessels participated in the Federally Managed Groundfish fishery. According to recorded data the number of vessels owned by Rockaway Beach residents that participated in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) in the same year was: crab (0/5/1), salmon (0/15/2), and shellfish (NA/1/NA).⁶

One Federally Managed Groundfish fishery permit was held by one Rockaway Beach resident in 2000. Recorded data indicates that the number of individual community members holding state permits in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: crab (0/1/0), salmon (0/12/1), shellfish (0/6/NA), and shrimp (1/0/0).⁷

A total of four permits were registered to Rockaway Beach residents in 2000, of which three were registered state permits. According to recorded data the number of state permits in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: salmon (0/0/2) and shrimp (1/0/0).⁸

Sportfishing

Three licensed charter vessel businesses were located in the community in 2003; however all vessels were homported in Garibaldi. Presently, Rockaway Beach has 9

licensing vendors. In 2000 the number of licenses sold by active agents was 1023 at a value of \$17,979.

Subsistence

Local community members, both tribal and nontribal, may engage in subsistence fishing for marine and stream resources in Rockaway Beach and the surrounding area. Under the trust doctrine, the federal government is charged to protect tribal resources and by constitutional mandate to protect natural resources. The government-to-government agreements made between tribal groups and the United States through treaties guarantee fishing rights on traditional grounds. Specific information on subsistence fishing in Rockaway Beach is not discussed in detail in this profile due to the lack of available data.

Involvement in North Pacific Fisheries

Commercial Fishing

Available data indicates that the community of Rockaway Beach was not involved in North Pacific commercial fisheries during 2000.

Sportfishing

In 2000 a total of 11 sportfishing licenses were purchased in Rockaway Beach for Alaska fisheries.

¹ Gilden, Jennifer, ed. 1999. Oregon's Changing Coastal Fishing Communities, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://seagrant.oregonstate.edu/sgpubs/onlinepubs/o99001.html> (access date - August 2004).

² Tobe, Lisa. 2003. Garibaldi, Tillamook County, Oregon, [Online]. Available: URL: http://www.fcresearch.org/neai/OR_case_studies/Garibaldi.pdf (access date - August 2004)

³ Garibaldi Chamber of Commerce. No date. Welcome to Garibaldi: The Pacific Ocean Gateway - History, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.garibaldioregon.com/history.htm> (access date - August 2004)

⁴ Guardino III, M. Constance, and Rev. Marilyn A. Riedel. Sovereigns of Themselves: A Liberating History of Oregon and Its Coast, Volume III, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www2.wi.net/~census/lesson36.html> (access date - August 2004).

⁵ Rockaway Beach Chamber of Commerce. No date. Home, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.rockawaybeach.net/index.htm> (access date - October 2004)

⁶ 'NA' refers to data which was not available, for example, due to few recorded permit numbers or the partially permitted nature of a fishery in 2000.

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